



COMMITTEE ON
WAYS & MEANS REPUBLICANS
RANKING MEMBER, DAVE CAMP

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER SAM JOHNSON
WAYS AND MEANS SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY
HEARING ON CLEARING THE DISABILITY CLAIMS BACKLOGS
NOVEMBER 19, 2009

(REMARKS AS PREPARED)

Republicans and Democrats on this Committee have long worked together to make sure Social Security has the resources it needs to effectively administer their benefit programs. During the last two fiscal years Social Security received funding at levels higher than the President's request, along with an additional \$1 billion to build a new computer center and to process rising numbers of claims for disability benefits resulting from the recession.

Today Social Security will again report to taxpayers what return they are receiving on their substantial investment.

I understand we'll hear some long overdue good news on the appeals front. Hearing offices have increased productivity and this has resulted in lower wait times for those who have been waiting well over a year for a decision on their appeal.

Beyond addressing today's service delivery challenges, lasting returns on investment depend on Social Security modernizing its technology infrastructure and consistently addressing program waste, fraud and abuse, including conducting continuing disability reviews, in order to save billions in program dollars and build taxpayer confidence. So I will be listening for real progress in these areas as well.

Although clearing disability backlogs is important, today marks the fourth hearing of this subcommittee this Congress and the third hearing on backlogs while we continue to ignore the fiscal challenges Social Security faces.

In August, the Congressional Budget Office reported that Social Security cash surpluses will turn into cash deficits in the next two years and that the Disability Insurance Trust Fund will be unable to pay full promised benefits in just nine years. President Obama has expressed his commitment to advance Social Security reform and we all know the sooner we act to protect and strengthen Social Security, the better.

Further, we've had no hearings on other key Agency challenges including the ongoing problem of identity theft and Social Security number misuse by those attempting to work illegally in this country.

So I hope this Subcommittee will turn to these issues on a bipartisan basis as soon as possible to examine options for change and find solutions.

I thank the witnesses for joining us today and presenting their testimony.

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